



# **Advocacy at Home Toolkit**

Program Toolkit: Tools and Resources to Become a  
More Effective Surgeon Advocate at Home



## Welcome

Thank you for engaging in the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Division of Advocacy and Health Policy's (DAHP) advocacy efforts at home! By advocating at home, you will continue to help raise the profile of issues important to surgeons and surgical patients and establish yourself as a trusted resource to your members of Congress and their staff. Your continued involvement demonstrates your commitment to surgeon advocacy, particularly developing and maintaining relationships with important elected officials.

This toolkit will provide you with all the necessary resources you need to prepare for and execute a successful meeting and become a more effective advocate at home. Staff encourages you to review the following information prior to your meeting or teleconference:

- Surgeon Advocacy
- Meeting Protocol
- Meeting Mishaps
- Social Media Guide
- Supplemental Resources
- Meeting Evaluation Form

For questions, or to learn more about ACS advocacy priorities or any of the enclosed resources, please contact DAHP staff at [ahp@facs.org](mailto:ahp@facs.org).

# Surgeon Advocacy

ACS' goals include improving surgical patient care and safeguarding standards of that care within an ethical practice environment for our profession. Even in the current challenging political climate, the College must continue to propose meaningful health policy proposals for Congress and state legislatures to consider. It is up to surgeon advocates to become experts within this space and advocate for meaningful, practical policies at the federal and state levels.

As a surgeon, your first-hand expertise and training provide a realistic perspective on health policy issues. Establishing yourself as a surgeon advocate is crucial to making your voice heard. More specifically, *regularly* engaging with members of Congress and their staff, and serving as a trusted resource on issues of importance to surgeons and the surgical patient, is essential. As a result, many lawmakers, particularly your elected officials, will look to you for guidance on complex issues.

## Meeting Protocol

To schedule a meeting with your legislators, visit the *SurgeonsVoice* online Action Center. Additionally, utilizing the following tips can help lay the groundwork for developing a mutually beneficial relationship between you and your elected officials.

### Prior to Your Meeting

**Be Flexible.** Members of Congress maintain extremely busy schedules, especially at home/in-district. Meeting details, times, and durations will vary.

**Come Prepared.** Supply relevant supplemental materials and information.

**Do Your Research.** Every office is different, so be sure to learn more about your member of Congress and their staff prior to your meeting. And, do not underestimate the influence of health policy staff. Serving as key advisors, staff frequently conduct research and prepare voting recommendations for the member.

**Learn the Issues.** Similar to getting to know your legislator, understanding ACS advocacy priorities is critical. Reference [facs.org/advocacy/federal](https://facs.org/advocacy/federal) and contact DAHP staff with any questions.

Browsing ACS publications like the *Bulletin* and *Advocacy Brief* in addition to visiting *SurgeonsVoice* online to learn more about advocacy and health policy issues that have the potential to affect surgeons and surgical patients across the country, may help provide additional context.

**“Friend” or “Follow” Your Elected Officials.** In today's social media-driven domain, politicians rely on Facebook, Twitter, and other vehicles as easy, effective platforms to get their message across to constituents and vice versa. Because social media is set up to engage an audience, you too can educate, praise, or respond to your elected official.

## During Your Meeting

**Make the Ask.** Being attentive and respectful while confidently reinforcing your ask goes a long way in ensuring your “ask” becomes a priority.

**Acknowledge If/When You Need to Obtain More Information.** If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to, inform the member and/or staff that you will get back to them with a response. Please utilize DAHP staff as a resource to assist with follow-up to an office.

**Share Your Story.** Be sure to share your personal story, if applicable.

**Say Thank You.** When your meeting concludes, thank your contact for his or her time, offer yourself as a trusted resource, and provide him or her with your contact information.

## After Your Meeting

**Follow-Up and Confirm.** Sample thank you correspondence is included for your information.

**Provide Feedback.** Your feedback and recommendations are important to us. Please use the meeting evaluation form as an opportunity to critique your meeting.

## Meeting Mishaps

Avoiding common meeting “don’ts” will help ensure a pleasant, productive meeting.

### Don’t...

**Be Tardy.** Congressional offices are very small, busy entities so arriving on time (no more than five minutes prior to your meeting or call time) is encouraged.

**Become Emotional.** Be proactive and anticipate the likelihood of earlier meetings running late, potential for the member or staff to disagree with your position, and more. If you are prepared for the chaos that is Congress, you will remain the calm, cool, collected expert in the room.

**Be Partisan.** You are entitled to your personal political views, but when representing the ACS, you are serving as surgery’s bipartisan voice at the federal level.

**Discuss Political Contributions.** It is illegal to disclose political activity or campaign/PAC contributions when discussing policy matters, especially inside a government office or building. Federal Election Commission (FEC) regulations prohibit tying a specific ask to a political contribution. Attending a local fundraiser or event is a great opportunity to present a check, thank a member of Congress for his or her leadership, and network with other health policy professionals.

# Social Media Sharing Guide

To elevate your engagement, consider using #advocateathome to share messages with your elected officials on Twitter and Facebook. Consider the following sample tweets, examples, and instructions when contacting your member of Congress via social media.

Twitter handles for all U.S. Representatives can be found at [twitter.com/cspan/lists/senators/u-s-representatives](https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/senators/u-s-representatives).  
Twitter handles for all U.S. Senators can be found at [twitter.com/cspan/lists/senators/members](https://twitter.com/cspan/lists/senators/members).

## Twitter

### Sample tweets:

I #advocateathome to encourage members of Congress to protect and promote [INSERT ISSUE].  
@SurgeonsVoice

I am working to #advocateathome on behalf of the @AmCollSurgeons helping to elevate the importance of ensuring access to #quality #surgical care.

[@ your Member of Congress] I am a surgeon #advocateathome working to educate my lawmakers about [INSERT ISSUE].

@AmCollSurgeons advocates! I hope you will join me and #advocateathome for meaningful change for #surgeons and #surgical #patients.

Thanks [@ your Member of Congress] for your support on [INSERT ISSUE]. Your help makes a difference as we #advocateathome for change at the local level and in Washington. @SurgeonsVoice

### Examples:

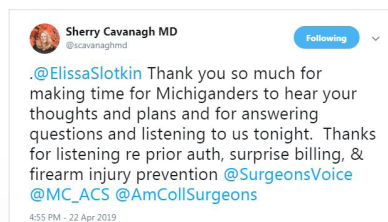


**Stephanie Bonne** @scrubedin Following

Thank you @Call\_Me\_Dutch for supporting @NNHVIP efforts. HVIPs are essential to the secondary prevention of #gunviolence and all violent injury. This is squarely "in the lane" of doctors and public health. #ThisisOurLane @ACSTrauma @SurgeonsVoice @rochelleami9 @UCSFWraparound

**Dutch Ruppensberger** @Call\_Me\_Dutch  
My op-ed in tomorrow's @baltimoresun highlights efforts at @shocktrauma to reduce revolving door of #gunviolence. + my bill to expand it. Even small actions are better than the "thoughts and prayers" we all offer after shootings. right? [baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/o...](https://baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/o...)

12:57 PM - 16 Nov 2018



**Sherry Cavanagh MD** @scavanaghmd Following

.@ElissaSlotkin Thank you so much for making time for Michiganders to hear your thoughts and plans and for answering questions and listening to us tonight. Thanks for listening re prior auth, surprise billing, & firearm injury prevention @SurgeonsVoice @MC\_ACS @AmCollSurgeons

4:55 PM - 22 Apr 2019



**Raquel Forsythe** @forsythe\_raquel Following

Thank you @USRepMikeDoyle for taking the time to meet with us! We appreciate your support for issues impacting PA-18! @pitttrauma @ACSTrauma @SurgeonsVoice #ACSLAS19



12:00 PM - 2 Apr 2019



**Amy Liepert** @amyliepert Following

Meeting with WI Representative @rempocan. Firearm Violence Prevention Research, Prior Authorization, Surprise Billing, Mission Zero and more. @SurgeonsVoice @AmCollSurgeons @ACSWSSAdvocacy



11:17 AM - 2 Apr 2019 from Washington, DC

## Twitter 101

Via smartphone or mobile device:

- **Sign in** to your Twitter account and type your tweet into the box at the top of your home timeline, or click the Tweet button in the top navigation bar
- **Confirm** your tweet is fewer than 280 characters
  - Extra characters show us as a number below the box, and you won't be able to send the tweet until it is under the threshold
    - Consider using shorthand to preserve characters
      - & instead of and
      - Utilize / and –
      - Use photos and tag accounts in the picture to save characters in the message
- **Click** the Tweet button to post the tweet to your profile

## Facebook

Sample post:

Join me and #advocateathome on behalf of @AmCollSurgeons legislative priorities.

Examples:



## Facebook 101

Via smartphone or mobile device:

- Your **Timeline** is where you can view your posts or posts you've been tagged in displayed by date
  - Your Timeline is also part of your profile
  - You can post to your Timeline either from the top of your profile or from the News Feed
- From the top of your Timeline, **click** what type of story you want to share (for example, status, photo/video)
- **Type** in any details you want to add
- **Select** an audience for your post
- **Click Post**
- If applicable, you can also tag friends, pick a date for the story, and add a location or photo

# Supplemental Resources

## [Advocacy Guide](#)

Review the enclosed comprehensive guide to become a more effective advocate.

## [Congressional Calendar](#)

View in-district work periods to find out when you might meet with your member of Congress at home.

## [Congressional Management Foundation](#)

Find out inside information about how Congress works, what motivates congressional staff, and necessary skills to help influence public policy.

## [C-SPAN](#)

Watch daily coverage of the U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, and other public policy forums.

## [House of Representatives](#)

Get to know representatives, leadership, committees, legislative activities, and process.

## [Inside Elections](#)

Review ratings, news, and analysis pertaining to current political races around the country.

## [Legislation Lookup](#)

Search for legislation of interest to you by title, activity, sponsor, key committee, and more.

## [U.S. Senate](#)

Get to know senators, leadership, committees, legislative activities, and process.



## Sample Thank You E-mail

*Subject:* Support [INSERT ISSUE]

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on [date]. I enjoyed speaking with you about [INSERT ISSUE] and the essential benefits that surgeons provide within our community.

As a [specialty] and a member of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), I urge you to [cosponsor, support, etc.] the [INSERT TITLE OF LEGISLATION] (H.R. XXXX and/or S. XXXX). As discussed during our initial meeting, this important legislation would help ensure that [INSERT RELEVANT DATA OR TALKING POINTS]. In order to help provide patients with timely access to quality health care services, the ACS believes that [INSERT POSITION].

I would be happy to provide additional follow up information if necessary.

Thank you again for all you do for surgeons and surgical patients.

## Sample Thank You Letter

[Date]

The Honorable First Name, Last Name  
500 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator [Last Name]:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on [date]. I enjoyed speaking with you about [INSERT ISSUE] and the essential benefits that surgeons provide within our community.

I hope that you will consider [cosponsor, support, etc.] the [INSERT TITLE OF LEGISLATION] (H.R. 2XXX and/or S. XXXX). As discussed in our initial meeting, this important legislation would help ensure that [INSERT RELEVANT DATA OR TALKING POINTS].

Whenever it is convenient for you, I would be delighted to give you a tour of my [practice or facility] and provide any additional follow up information that may be helpful to you or your staff.

Thank you again for your time and public service.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name, Title]  
[Phone Number]  
[E-mail Address]



## Thank You

Thank you in advance for doing your part to participate and work to help educate members of Congress about important issues facing surgeons and patients at home.

Although surgeon advocate local meeting assessments have been extremely positive, stating that duration, substance, and policymaker interaction was exceptional, working to ensure advocating at home is easy for all ACS members remains a DAHP priority. Here are some past testimonials from engaged surgeon advocates:

*“Although the Annual Advocacy meeting is important for educating all surgeons, **in-district meetings should receive more emphasis as members receive more face time with the legislators**, which offers a better opportunity to establish important relationships.”* —Charles Coren, MD, FACS

*“I had a 45-minute meeting with Rep. Don Young and his chief of staff. **It was a great two-way conversation where Rep. Young offered feedback regarding several ACS initiatives.**”* —Danny Robinette, MD, FACS

*“I met with Rep. Bobby Scott in his Newport News office for about 40 minutes. He had two legislative staff sit in. **It was a very positive meeting.**”* —Leonard Weireter, MD, FACS



*Michael Spedick, MD, FACS, FAAP, FAAO, and Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-NJ-3)*

# Advocacy At Home: Meeting Evaluation Form

Your feedback and recommendations are important to us. Please use this as an opportunity to evaluate your meeting. You can also email meeting assessment feedback to [ahp@facs.org](mailto:ahp@facs.org).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Representative/Senator/Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

## Meeting Evaluation

A. Please provide comments about your meeting experience.

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B. Did the member of Congress (or staff) agree to take action on any ACS-specific policy priorities? If yes, please specify:

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C. Did the member of Congress express interest in touring your practice or facility? If yes, please specify:

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**D. Please rate your overall meeting experience.**

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Unsatisfactory		Average		Excellent	Other

**E. Did you find the member of Congress/staff engaged throughout the meeting?**

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Unsatisfactory		Average		Excellent	Other

**F. Please rate your experience with scheduling/staff.**

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Unsatisfactory		Average		Excellent	Other

**G. Please rate the office's interest in a follow-up meeting.**

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Unsatisfactory		Average		Excellent	Other

**H. Were the resources provided to you by DAHP staff helpful, timely, etc.?**

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Unsatisfactory		Average		Excellent	Other

**Thank you for engaging in ACS advocacy efforts at home!**





Contact the Division of Advocacy and Health Policy

 202-337-2701  [ahp@facs.org](mailto:ahp@facs.org)  [SurgeonsVoice](http://SurgeonsVoice)  [@SurgeonsVoice](https://twitter.com/SurgeonsVoice)